United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General leaves New York this afternoon for Africa; talks scheduled with Nigerian Government in its capacity as Chairman of Organization of African Unity in Abuja; to attend OAU Summit meeting in Dakar; to hold talks with British Prime Minister and Secretary of Foreign Office in London.

+ Secretary-General invites Iraq to send representative to New York to discuss extension of Memorandum of understanding between Iraq and United Nations on humanitarian operations in that country.

+ Ship carrying 3,000 Somali asylum-seekers runs aground off Yemeni coast, according to report from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva.

+ Seminar on Palestine Question recommends that advisory opinion from World Court be sought on Israeli practices in Palestinian territory.

+ Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia demand withdrawal of Russian armed forces from their territory; urge that western economic assistance to Russian Federation be tied to its political and military conduct in Baltic States.

+ Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterates appeal to Security Council for military action under United Nations Charter, saying that as an "independent and sovereign State" it is "entitled to protection".

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will leave New York this afternoon for visits to Africa and the United Kingdom. On the first leg of his trip, he will meet in Abuja, Nigeria, on 27 June, with representatives of the Nigerian Government, in its capacity as Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). He will then travel to Dakar, Senegal, to attend the Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the OAU on 29 and 30 June.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

Following the Summit, the Secretary-General will travel to London for talks with Prime Minister John Major and Secretary of the Foreign Office Douglas Hurd. He will return to Headquarters over the weekend of 4 July.

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The Memorandum of understanding between Iraq and the United Nations that sets out modalities for humanitarian operations in that country, including the deployment of United Nations guards, is due to expire on 30 June. However, attempts by the Coordinator of Humanitarian Relief Assistance, Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, to extend the agreement "have not been met with a positive response from Iraq", a United Nations spokesman said today.

If the matter can not be resolved by the United Nations Coordinator in Baghdad, the Secretary-General has instructed Mr. Eliasson to convey an invitation to the Iraqi Government to send a representative to New York to discuss the matter urgently, the spokesman said.

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A ship that wandered the Gulf of Aden for 16 days in search of haven for 3,000 Somalis fleeing their war-torn country has run aground off the southern coast of Yemen, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported yesterday.

According to asylum-seekers who managed to reach shore, 60 of the boatpeople, mostly women and children, have died of exposure, dehydration and hunger aboard the ship over the past three days. More than 700 of the refugees have jumped overboard in a desperate attempt to reach shore. The disembarkation had been delayed because of the huge influx of Somali asylum-seekers in recent weeks.

The Agency said the war in Somalia had sent nearly 800,000 Somalis fleeing to neighbouring Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. Almost 50,000 Somalis have already been given sanctuary in Yemen, which is still trying to cope with the sudden return of more than 1 million of its own people following the Persian Gulf war.

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The General Assembly or the Security Council should seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on Israeli policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory, according to the participants in the Eigth North American Regional Seminar on the Question of Palestine, which concluded its two-day session last night.

In their conclusions and recommendations, which were adopted by consensus, as orally amended, Seminar participants appealed to the Council to strengthen the United Nations presence in the occupied Palestinian territory to ensure the physical protection and the safety and security of the Palestinian people. They also recommended that the international

non-governmental organization community support concrete activites to ensure protection by increasing and expanding its efforts at public education, advocacy and direct protective involvement.

In a closing statement, Victor Camilleri, Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said that despite the lack of progress in the current Middle East negotiating peace process as a result of Israel's intransigence, the Committee continued to hope that a breakthrough would be possible so that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region could be achieved.

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Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have demanded the immediate withdrawal of Russian armed forces from their territory and that Western economic assistance to the Russian Federation be tied to its political and military conduct in the Baltic States.

In a joint letter to the Secretary-General, dated 17 June, the leadership of the three States expressed regret that Russian negotiators had refused to discuss the process of withdrawal of their armed forces. They stressed that troops of a member State of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) "may not be stationed on the territory of other CSCE Member States without the consent of the latter". If this were to be the case, the letter said, this would be equivalent to the use of armed coercion and intervention, undermining the principles of the United Nations Charter as well as the Helsinki process.

The letter was signed by the Presidents of the three Republics, Arnold Ruutell of Estonia, Anatolijs Gorbunovs of Latvia, and Vytautas Landsbergis of of Lithuania.
(Document S/24139)

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Bosnia and Herzegovina has reiterated its appeal to the Security Council for coordinated military action to maintain or restore international peace and security under the United Nations Charter. The country charges that "the independent and sovereign State of Bosnia and Herzegovina is entitled to protection" and that any further delay would result in deaths of thousands of innocent people.

In a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, the Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haris Silajdzic, said words failed to describe the human suffering in his country, where "concentration camps are not part of the past, but reality today". As a tragic result of the aggression, 50,000 persons were now dead and the number was rising, the Foreign Minister said. The rapidly escalating death toll was the result of new and alarming reports reaching the Government from outlying towns and villages, mainly along the border with Serbia.

According to estimates, 100,000 people had been wounded, thousands were missing, and 1,4 million people were now homeless, Mr. Silajdzic said. (Document S/24137)

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